BACKGROUNDER

ENVIRONMENTAL ILLNESS

- About 3,000 people in Ontario have illnesses associated with sensitivities to chemicals and environmental factors that interfere with their ability to work and to lead normal lives.

- Some develop allergy-like symptoms, such as skin rashes, tremors, headaches, nausea and vomiting. The symptoms may result in social withdrawal, depression, greatly restricted diets and serious physical illnesses.

- Sufferers have difficulty getting appropriate care, and caregivers have difficulty knowing what appropriate care is.

- In 1989, the Advisory Committee on Environmental Hypersensitivity was set up to encourage and review research proposals and recommend funding

- In 1990, the ministry sponsored a workshop for researchers and clinicians on environmental hypersensitivity to generate ideas for research proposals and multidisciplinary research teams

- Since 1990, the ministry has funded five studies:

    - dietary management of food sensitivity;

    - effects of exposures to indoor air pollutants in environmentally sensitive and normal persons;

    - measurement instruments for the study of multiple chemical sensitivities;

    - instruments to measure environmental hypersensitivity, special rotational diets in the treatment of food sensitivity.

- The ministry also provided $649,548 for a major research project to develop sound, objective, physiological indicators of food sensitivity.

- In 1992, the Advisory Committee recommended adding a clinical component and education of caregivers and consumers to the existing research program.

- The Advisory Committee reformed as the Clinical Research Advisory Board and added consumers and clinical ecologists.

CLINICAL RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD
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AND NON-SPECIFIC DISORDERS

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- 30 -

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RAPHIES

...y Isles, holds an MD from the University of Toronto, and an FRCP in occupational health. Prior to this she obtained a B.A.Sc. and a M.A.Sc. in chemical engineering from the University of Toronto. Since 1984, she has worked in the Family Practice Health Centre at Women's College Hospital. Dr. Isles has a great deal of experience in the occupational health area and an interest in industrial toxicology.

Gail McKeown Eyssen, holds a Ph.D. in Epidemiology and is Associate Professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics at the University of Toronto. She is Director of the Master's Degree and Ph.D. Programs in Epidemiology. Professor Eyssen has investigated the role of environmental influences on health which range from the influence of diet in cancer to methylmercury exposure and neurological abnormalities. Since 1989, Dr. Eyssen has served as a member of the former ministry Advisory Committee for Environmental Hypersensitivity and has undertaken research into the epidemiology of multiple chemical sensitivity.